SENATE LI	CAL GOVERNMENT
EXHIBIT NO	
	2-8-07
BILL NO	3B 201 *

PLAN HELENA

8 February 2007

2007 Montana Legislature Senate Local Government Committee

RE: SENATE BILL 201, GIVING MONTANAN'S A VOICE IN GROWTH

Dear Senators:

My name is Richard Thweatt. I live here in Helena and am president of Plan Helena, Inc., an organization dedicated to responsible and farsighted management of growth. I urge you to recommend passage of Senate Bill 201.

Two or three years ago, the City of Helena received an application and request for annexation and connection to city water and sewer for a proposed major subdivision about half a mile north of the Helena airport in an area predominantly in agricultural use, irrigated, with high ground water and a high risk of soil liquifaction. Lewis & Clark County's growth policy adopted in 2003 classified the area as neither suitable for urban growth nor already transitioning to urban land use, i.e., rural. But the county had no zoning regulations to guide the future development of this area. The City of Helena's growth policy simply designated all lands within 3 miles of city limits as potentially suitable for high density residential use. There was, and is, a total disconnect between the growth policies of the two jurisdictions about the future of this area, and most of the area in Helena's urban fringe. The two jurisdictions are now working hard to correct this situation.

The result of this situation was that the Helena City Commission approved the request to annex and serve this subdivision out of fear for how it would develop under county subdivision regulations and concern that, some day, the City would be called on to serve an area that was not built to city standards for public water and sewer and would be extremely expensive to retrofit. Some neighbors of the subdivision are very unhappy about the city's great leap northward and are suing the City of Helena over the decision.

This is a prime example of why we need Senate Bill 201. An infrastructure plan, jointly developed by the City of Helena and Lewis & Clark County, would have proved extremely useful in this situation.

It is high time this bill became law.

Sincerely, Richard Thweats

Richard Thweatt